

"Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act" and "H.R. 4184, the "You Were There, You Get Care Act."

In the preparation of these bills, I am indebted to Earl J. Lee, member of the National Association of Atomic Veterans (NAAV) and National District VI Chairman of the AMVETS RECA (Radiation Exposure Compensation Act) Program. Resolutions supporting the provisions in these bills have been passed by the National AMVETS.

For too long, many Atomic Veterans and veterans exposed to Depleted Uranium have been on the outside looking in and wondering why? Were they not loyal and faithful in their military service? Do they not deserve compensation or care for their illnesses?

H.R. 4183, the "Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act", directs the Department of Justice to obtain the records of all Atomic Veterans from the Department of Energy Operations Office in Nevada. Using these records, they are to locate and advise all veterans or their surviving widows of their rights under RECA and guide them in filing a claim for the compensation that is due them.

RECA is the program passed by Congress in 1990 (P.L. 101-426) that provides compassionate payments to individuals who contract cancers and other serious diseases as a result of their exposure to radiation from above ground tests of nuclear weapons or from employment in underground uranium mines.

Because the VA did not provide medical care to Atomic Veterans in many cases, many died at an early age. So there are thousands of widows, many on fixed incomes, who have never heard of RECA and do not know that they may be eligible for compensation. My bill will help them apply and receive substantial compassionate payments to ease their burden.

Depleted uranium is an incredibly effective weapon, but its residue has a half-life of 4 billion years and many believe that it is a carcinogen. We simply cannot allow another generation of veterans to be treated as were the Atomic Veterans! H.R. 4184, the "You Were There, You Get Care Act", ensures that veterans who served in the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent conflicts will be considered "service-connected disabled" for any illnesses cur-

rently covered by RECA and other diseases found by the Veterans' Affairs Secretary to result from DU exposure.

For example, veterans serving in the 1991 Gulf War or those providing clean-up or servicing of vehicles or equipment that had been in the Persian Gulf, shall be considered as exposed and if they are ill, their illnesses shall be deemed "service-connected" with the accompanying VA health care and VA compensation provided.

In addition, this bill calls for an in-depth medical study to be conducted by independent civilian medical entities, independent of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to determine other diseases that may result from exposure to depleted uranium. A copy of the study will be sent to the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees.

We need to ensure that veterans from the Gulf War and all wars waged since will not die an early and painful death without the health care and compensation they need and deserve.

Taken together, H.R. 4183, and H.R. 4184 makes a bold statement—that when young men and women volunteer for service, they can count on their government to compensate them and care for them if their service lends to illnesses. These assurances are so important and so necessary and should aid in the recruitment and retention of military personnel.

HONORING MAJOR GENERAL TERRY TUCKER

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay public tribute to a remarkable soldier and citizen from my home state. Major General Terry Tucker recently relinquished command of the Fort Knox or School, bringing to a close a 3-year tenure marked by unprecedented growth and change at one of America's most important military installations.

General Tucker joined the Army in 1972, signing in at the same building at Fort Knox where, 31 years later, he would take full installation command. Raised on a dirt farm in West

Virginia, General Tucker, with the help of an Army scholarship was the first member of his family to graduate from college. After completing his initial 4-year obligation to the Army, General Tucker and his wife Patti went on to fulfill a wide variety of military assignments at home and abroad throughout their 33 years of service to our country.

Upon his return to Fort Knox, first as Deputy Commanding General in 2000, then as Commanding General in 2003, General Tucker presided over a wide scope of critical responsibilities. Along with managing on-base training, he was authorized to develop and implement training for the entire United States Mounted Force, changing the way soldiers are trained to meet a new wartime mission. General Tucker successfully matched this training with a strong focus on improved combat systems and equipment, such as the Abrams tank and the Bradley IFV, to meet new and emerging threats.

During his time at Fort Knox, General Tucker's leadership inspired officers and civilians to be good neighbors, making Fort Knox and its surrounding communities a better place to live and work. In this capacity, General Tucker worked hard to build partnerships with community organizations to support Fort Knox Soldiers and their families. General Tucker also oversaw critical improvements to the Garrison and IMA, modernizing facilities to enhance Fort Knox's future viability.

Perhaps General Tucker's most enduring legacy to the citizens of my congressional district will be his tireless promotion of Fort Knox's military value during Base Realignment and Closure proceedings this year. Because of his efforts, Fort Knox remains open, adapting to a new mission as a vital multi-functional home to operational army forces and various administrative commands.

It is my great privilege to recognize Major General Terry Tucker today, before the entire U.S. House of Representatives, for his lifelong example of leadership and service. I would like to thank him personally for his exemplary stewardship at Fort Knox during a time of war and administrative transition. His unique achievements and dedication to the men and women of the U.S. Army make him an outstanding American worthy of our collective honor and respect.